

Miltenberger, Molly

From: geverett <geverett@montana.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 24, 2013 5:50 AM
To: Miltenberger, Molly
Subject: support for Montana main Street Program

My name is George Everett. I represent Mainstreet Uptown Butte, a non-profit organization of 165 members including 120 small businesses in Butte. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to express my support of the statewide Montana Main Street program under consideration as part of HB2.

Since 1999, Mainstreet Uptown Butte has worked to preserve and rejuvenate Butte's traditional central business district. We have planted close to 800 trees and thousands of flowers, hung dozens of banners, weeded and removed debris from dozens of lots, painted and repaired more than 50 buildings, removed graffiti and added security lights and patrols. We organize festivals and special events such as our growing Farmers' Market, Christmas Stroll, and Annual Ice Sculpting contest. And we have coordinated efforts to illuminate eight of our iconic gallows frames with lights so they are visible to anyone passing our city at night and to place large US flags on them in the summer. Along the way we have enjoyed the continued support of four local government administrations over the last 11 years.

The Main Street approach is one of several influences driving what many are calling an Uptown renaissance. The results are dramatic to anyone who has visited our city in the last few years. Butte is cleaner and greener, brighter and safer with several formerly vacant buildings now sheltering viable businesses.

The Main Street approach builds on a community's assets. It is well suited for the independent spirit of Montana communities. Historic preservation as an economic development tool can help preserve historic buildings by attracting investment and commerce to the area.

The idea that business growth and historic preservation are compatible has been proven successful in nearly 2,000 communities across the country including in Montana communities like Butte that have embraced the Main Street approach.

The Main Street approach helped us to bring the National Folk Festival to Butte and Montana from 2008-2010, an event that continues today as the Montana Folk Festival -- www.montanafolkfestival.com. This event has allowed us to coalesce the energy, talent and enthusiasm of nearly 1,000 volunteers a year from across the state to present this event each July that has helped transform Butte into Montana's Festival City.

The program provides the tools and resources to volunteers with a wide range of interests, talents and skills to perform service that enhances the well being of their community. The program bridges political philosophies by finding common purpose in the protection and perpetuation of what is best in our communities.

We hope to see more Main Street programs nurtured in communities across Montana by the Montana Main Street program. While each Montana community is different with its own assets and obstacles, we all share the common interests of preserving our rich and varied heritage while ensuring the commercial vitality of our traditional downtowns. We believe that widespread application of a proven program like Main Street in more Montana communities is an excellent way to reach the shared goal of working toward economic vitality for our great state.

Thank you very much,

George Everett
Executive Director